Fibertown

A. Shane Stewart from Fibertown presented on Fibertown’s history and services.

- Fibertown was established as a tier II datacenter in Downtown Bryan in 1997.
  - Originally served primarily as a disaster recovery facility for companies from Houston.
  - Customer-base has broadened and now many production services are hosted at Fibertown.
  - In 2007, Fibertown built a tier IV facility.
- Common concerns for a colocation datacenter include: Connectivity, Performance, Redundancy, Security, 100% uptime
  - Fibertown Bryan details
    - 100% uptime guarantee backed by a Service Level Agreement
    - Space for Texas A&M customers is inside the Texas A&M border firewall.
    - SAS 70 Type I & II audited
    - Approximately 15,000 square feet of raised floor space divided among 4 separate pods
    - 24X7 security and Network Operation Center
    - Tier IV facility, fully redundant, system+system
- Fibertown’s has a new datacenter in North Houston with 30,000 sq. feet of raised floor space.

B. Community Relationships

- Texas A&M
  - Connectivity from Wehner to Fibertown data center
  - Networking and Information Security have made it easy for departments on campus to connect with Fibertown.
- Fibertown serves as an emergency operations center for Texas A&M, City of College Station, City of Bryan, City of Houston Public works, and Brazos County
  - Incident command center, staffed during emergencies by police, fire, EMS and other critical personnel

C. Discussion

- Fibertown has a master purchase order with the university. For pricing contact Jana McDonald in Telecom.
- Does Fibertown offer a hosting service or just provide data center space?
  - Fibertown is in the data center space business, however the Network Operations Center can provide some onsite support (e.g., restarting a system).
- What is the minimum amount of space to rent?
  - Currently a full cabinet, but looking into the possibility of half cabinet rates.
- Can multiple departments cost share a rack?
  - This must be worked out with Texas A&M telecom and purchasing.
Item 2 Subcommittee Updates

A. Business Continuity hasn’t done much yet, but has collected some information.

B. Communications

- The ITAC retreat tentatively scheduled for the afternoon of July 21st and all day on July 22nd. The communications subcommittee will work on an agenda for the event. If you have ideas for items that need to be covered please email lbrender@tamu.edu.
- ITAC will be presenting at June 1st IT Forum. The communications subcommittee is working on content. Ron Szabo will give an overview of ITAC and discuss items that the committee is actively working on. Becky Carr, Steve Conway, and David Sweeney will be asked to give a summary of the progress and recommendations made by their subcommittees last year.
- The Communications and Marketing Team for Texas A&M Information Technology is redesigning the IT Forum/ITAC website. The Communications Subcommittee met with them to discuss content for the site, and including a link to the ITAC internal site, which will be moved to a confluence wiki.

C. Identity Management

- Met with the CIS Infrastructure Services and Support team who are in the definition and requirements phase of the identity management initiative and expect to develop requirements within the next 60 days.
- eSignatures
  - As part of its strategic plan, Academic Services is seeking approval from the Office of General Council (OGC) for eSignatures.
  - While this can be done individually by coordinating with an outside vendor, it is expensive and other departments at Texas A&M may benefit from a centralized solution.
  - To establish an eSignature program on campus, we need a proofing process to confirm the identity of students when assigning the NetID. At this time we also need a clear, undeniable statement that sharing passwords is not allowed.
  - In order to proof students, we would need to see them in person. There are not many opportunities to do this.
    - All incoming students meet with an advisor.
    - What about people who never step foot on campus?
    - This is a policy issue that we have to address.
  - Tom Golson has all of the documentation that Academic Services has gathered as part of this process. He noticed similarities between the eSignature requirements and the InCommon Silver program, and is developing some ideas for acceptable proofing. After a plan is established, we need to take it back to OGC for approval.
- Central Active Directory Forest: a campus-wide system that would authenticate against campus LDAP server. CIS has asked for student funding starting this fall for identity management, and is not looking for a source of non-student funds.
- CIS has upgraded CAS and now both the College of Engineering and the Bush School can authenticate with CAS and/or local credentials.

D. IT Best Practice Metrics

- Subcommittee has not yet convened. The auditors have provided a memo with top causes for code 4 audits. This is a promising place to start.
E. Passwords
- This subcommittee will provide best practice recommendations for passwords to the IT Best Practices Subcommittee.
- Progress:
  - Talked with Willis to ensure that the recommendations meet the needs of the CISO.
  - One issue is level of password requirements for systems that have less accessibility.
  - Anything that is easily accessible needs a more complex password, but length between password changes needs to increase to make complexity more feasible.

Item 3: ITAC Engagement
A. Mid-year ITAC self-assessment.
- Reviewed formal mission and organization, ITAC retreat mission statement, vision statement, goals, take away concepts.
- Talking points
  - Do we have a good mix of Issue deliberation vs. information presentations?
    1. Subcommittees need to realize that they can bring discussion to a group.
    2. Issues in your units need to be brought ITAC.
  - Participation in IPC and Vision 2020
  - Influential – Are we making a difference?
  - Logistics – meeting schedule, agenda planning
    1. Summer is coming up and we will drop back to once per month
    2. ITAC should be a priority for everybody, is twice a month too much?
    3. We’d like to hear from you about items to cover during ITAC.
B. Around the Room
- Becky Carr: Looking back over the year, we’ve made improvements. We’ve done a few things in Email and Career ladder. But moving into IT Best Practices and Business Continuity is clearly proactive. I think these are serious areas where we can show that we are growing.
- Henrik Schmiediche: I’ve learned a lot. It’s great to see what other people are doing. It keeps you from having tunnel vision. Facilitation of communication is very valuable.
- Stephanie Leary: My group is very difficult in regards to 2-way communication, because it took a while to find all groups I represent. I think Career Ladder was one of the best things to come out of the committee.
- Steve Conway: Trust is increasing in ITAC which creates growth, and builds the overall power of the organization. Being able to have this body speak as one voice is more powerful than any of our individual voices.
- Lauri Brender: Agenda planning needs work. We have a small group trying to develop the agendas. We would really like everyone’s help in providing that information. Follow through: How are we making sure that progress is made. ITAC needs to be more recognizable. We need to raise awareness of what we are doing and who we are.
- Fred Fisher: First year we were much more focused on gathering information than on making recommendations, but I think we’ve come a long way.
- David Sweeney: We’ve come a tremendous way in past 2 years. I think we need to move from goals to measurable objectives. Level of participation is lower than it should be. I think everyone needs to be involved on at least one subcommittee. I think we need to be influencers on campus and speak with one voice.
- Bill Chollett: I’ve been on the committee for about a year, and appreciate hearing information from other groups. I think the retreat helped me understand what the committee is doing.
• Rick Young: I wanted to make sure that everyone was aware that we have made a large effect. Business Continuity and Best Practices are two very important items, and we will provide a boiler plate that will help to achieve goals across the board.
• Juan Garza: The University has been discussing shared services, but ITAC gives us the opportunity to discuss shared strategy. Not only what the objectives are for ITAC, but for the university as a whole. What is the strategic point in defining who we are as ITAC. Seeing some stuff that everyone is doing is really valuable to help us identify areas for improvement. But the vision I have, is shared strategy.
• Mark Harris: we have matured quite a bit. We can continue to grow. We are becoming more recognizable on campus. Combined strategy is a very good point. Topics we are covering now are primary topics of my concern.
• Andy Bland: ITAC has come a long way in last 2 years. Once a month meetings might be a better option. It is time to reach out to the Division of Operations again.
• Adam Mikeal: In the time that I’ve been here, I’ve appreciate information transfer.
• Jim Culver: Communication is very valuable. Listening to everyone’s comments and communications is a great value.
• Stephen Balfour: I’m impressed with CIS’s willingness to engage with us. It is valuable to me as I map out the strategic plans at the university level. Looking for solutions and partners in collaboration. Lots of subcommittees have done work that is relevant to me.
• Tom Lyster: As a new comer to ITAC and Agriculture, I was trying to get comfortable in both positions. Seeing the maturity of the topic means we’re get our whole house in order. Awareness will happen when we present valuable information like IT Best Practices.
• Pete Marchbanks: I appreciate the opportunity to sit in meeting and hear your concerns. Your concerns are similar to ours just on a different scale.
• Willis Marti: This group is on its way to becoming a more self-sustaining committee. I appreciate that maturity as a key component of the communication we need to maintain.
• Jeff McCabe: This is one of the greatest things to come along in a number of years.

**Item 4: Officer Nominations**
   A. It's that time: Email nominations to Lauri Brender or Ron Szabo
      • Positions open: Chair, Vice-Chair and a new position for Secretary/Treasurer

**Item 5: Open Discussion**
   A. Fred Fisher asked about interest in WebX if it were available at a reasonable price
      • Several members expressed interest and offered rough estimates of number of licenses needed.
   B. Henrik Schmiediche offered a little additional information about Fibertown
      • Overall great service if you work within their standard parameters. Using a larger than suggested rack (48 unit) elevators were too small and power pricing was not competitive.
   C. Retreat Logistics
      • Steve Conway offered to set up the logistics for the Galveston Retreat. The committee agreed that the retreat should start after lunch on Thursday, July 21, and that a Thursday night event should be planned.
      • Committee members are responsible for their own hotel rooms, but Steve will prepare a list of hotels that offer a state rate. It may be more fun for the majority of members to stay in the same hotel.